

## it's only blood by addandsubtract

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**Summary:**

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## it's only blood

### Author's Note:

the third part of this little future fic series! and probably the last one, since this is sort of where i saw mike ending up when i started writing the first part. i hope y'all have enjoyed it! ♥

After Mike gets to Steve's, the first thing he does is call Nance. He hasn't seen her since Christmas - she travels a lot for work, but not much brings her back to Indiana, and Mike thinks, privately, that she and Jonathan are going to be in Arizona for the long haul. They talk by phone, though not much. She's still his sister. She picks up on the second ring.

"That was fast," he says.

"We have caller ID," Nance says.

Mike says, "I'm at Steve's." He glances from the kitchen into the living room, where Steve is sitting. He's pretending to be relaxed, reclining, but Mike can see the tension in his shoulders even with both arms spread over the back of the couch. He's watching Mike, but Mike's okay with that. Things are fucked, but it's not Steve's fault. Steve cares about him.

"I knew you were home," Nance says, casual. If she's curious or worried, it's hard to tell from her voice. "And if it was Steve, he'd probably have a good reason to call."

"Yeah," Mike says. He huffs out a breath. "I told Mom and Dad I'm gay."

"Did they kick you out?" There's some surprise there, which Mike understands - their parents aren't loud or angry, they're just conventional to the point of obliviousness, even when it hurts. Maybe especially about the things that hurt.

"No," Mike says. "They asked how I knew - if I was really sure, and

did I understand how unsafe ‘that lifestyle’ is?” He snorts, and he hears Nance do the same. He hasn’t always been careful, but he knew that he should be, and he knew how to be. He’s gotten tested. He hasn’t fucked anyone except Steve in almost a year, and they don’t even live in the same place most of the time. He’s about as safe as could be expected of someone his age.

“‘That lifestyle,’ really?” Nance asks. It’s hard to pinpoint the tone in her voice - disappointment, maybe, or disgust.

“I don’t know what you expected. At least they didn’t tell me that I could learn to be straight if I tried hard enough.” He pauses. “Dad might have, I guess, if Mom hadn’t been there.”

“Fuck, Mike,” Nance says. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine,” Mike says. “It could have been worse.”

“It’s *not* fine.” Nance sounds upset, now, which is nice. He likes that she’s still just his older sister in some ways - angry at the unfairness of the world.

It could have been worse, is the thing. His parents didn’t tell him he couldn’t see Holly, or that he’d be unwelcome at home. He’s pretty sure if he went back there now they’d pretend he hadn’t said anything and they’d never speak of it again, which is its own kind of torture. Some small part of him was hoping, honestly, for the comfort and support that only comes from parents like Joyce Byers. They didn’t prove him wrong, and he was hoping they would.

“Mike?” Nance’s voice crackles over the line and Mike wishes, for a stupid moment, that she was close by.

“I don’t know what I was expecting,” Mike says, and his voice breaks at the end. He feels - hot with shame, somehow, like wanting them to be better is a failure on his part. “They’re exactly who I thought they were.”

“I’m sorry,” Nance says. She sighs. “I’m sorry they aren’t better. I love you, though. I’m proud of you. Promise me you’ll visit.”

“Thanks, Nance. You too. And - I’ll think about it.”

When they hang up, he goes and sits next to Steve on couch. Steve doesn't try to touch him, but he does turn, say, "How'd that go?"

"Fine. She's - I guess this will be just another bullet point on her organized list of our parents' failings."

Steve laughs, and it makes something in Mike's chest uncoil. "She's good at grudges."

"One of my favorite things about her," Mike says, and then, "Sorry to show up late like this. I know I didn't - uh, warn you, or anything."

"Hey," Steve says, smile lopsided. "You know I'm always happy to see you."

Mike is still feeling tender, emotionally bruised, and so the easy way Steve says it makes him ache. It's a better ache, but some of it must show on his face, because Steve's eyebrows go concerned.

"Mike?"

Mike laughs, but he might be crying a little too. Steve reaches out for him, then, wrapping gangly arms around his shoulders and pulling him in. Mike feels conspicuous, burying his face against Steve's neck, but Steve doesn't seem to mind.

"They weren't even that bad," Mike says, the words muffled against Steve's skin.

"They're your parents," Steve says, like it's that simple. Maybe it is. Mike wants them to love him no matter what, he wants that love to be unconditional the way he was promised when he was a kid. But they're only people, and it turns out that they can't give that to him.

"Sorry," Mike says, again. He's used to being more together than this. Steve kisses the top of his head, the unruly, curly mop of his hair.

"Shut up," Steve says, fond. "I'm selfishly glad you came here. You could have gone - to El, or Will, that would have made sense, too. I want to be that person for you."

Mike thinks that Steve doesn't really understand how much Mike

likes him, and part of him is grateful for that. It's not fair to Steve, but Mike's never been very good at being vulnerable. He's reckless, a hothead, but that's different than being totally honest about his feelings. Steve is better at that than he is.

"I didn't - I wouldn't go to El first about this," Mike says. It's true, though partially because El doesn't always pay her phone bill on time, and he knew he needed to call Nance. It's also that he just wanted to see Steve.

When Mike pulls back Steve is smiling at him. Mike knows that he doesn't exactly deserve someone as emotionally transparent as Steve is, but he got lucky, somehow. He wasn't nice or honest and he still got lucky.

"I don't know if that helps," he adds. His voice is rough. Steve grew up and turned into someone reliable and good. Mike grew up and he's still as volatile as he was when he was twelve. He can try, though.

"I said it was selfish," Steve says, and shakes his head. "But, uh. Yeah, it helps." His smile is crooked. Mike is mostly not crying anymore, and he leans in, pressing his mouth to Steve's.

"Thanks," he says. Steve shrugs, like it isn't a big deal. It's a big deal.

Mike stays over, which isn't exactly new, it's just new that he hasn't bothered to lie to his parents about where he went. He didn't tell them where he was going, but that's not their business anymore.

Steve isn't careful with him, which Mike appreciates. He's not going to come apart, he's just disappointed and sad. He doesn't want to talk about it any more than he has to. Steve kisses him with familiar desperation, like maybe he's always thinking about how in a few months Mike will be gone again. Mike is still taller, but he lets Steve spread him out on the bed, naked, Steve's body a heavy weight on top of him. Steve says he has a joint somewhere, but Mike doesn't feel like smoking - he just wants this feeling, Steve smiling against his mouth, Steve's teeth scraping over his jaw.

Steve sucks a mark into Mike's neck, dark and embarrassing, like they're high school seniors necking in the car after prom. Mike tries to hold back whimpery noises and fails, tilting his head to give Steve more room. They don't have to be careful anymore. When Steve is satisfied he pulls back, sitting up to look at Mike spread out on his bed. His grin is wry, somewhat proprietary, more than a little dirty. Mike feels breathless looking at him.

"Can I fuck you?" Steve asks, fingertips trailing over Mike's stomach. Mike nods. He doesn't trust his voice.

Steve leans over Mike to grab the lube from the bedside table, and Mike can't help but run his hands over the stretched muscle of Steve's back and stomach, his ribs. Steve is ticklish, and curls away, laughing, drawing back enough to grab for Mike's wrists, pinning them to the bed above his head. The lube hits Mike in the stomach and then rolls off onto the bedspread beside him.

"Clumsy," Mike says, and Steve rolls his eyes.

"Maybe if you weren't so distracting," he says, eyes raking down over Mike's body, the way his stretched arms make his back arch, the spread of his thighs.

"Shameless flattery," Mike says, but when Steve leans down to kiss him, Mike kisses back.

Steve opens Mike up with slippery fingers, one after the other until Mike is pressing his hips back, trying to get more. Steve's hands are large and blunt, callused with honest work, and Mike likes the way they look, framing his hips, pressing up inside him.

"C'mon," he says, when he's wet and slippery, dick curved up over his stomach. "I'm ready, you can - fuck."

"I guess I can," Steve says, and grins, leaning down to bite into the skin pulled taut over Mike's ribs, hard enough to make him whine and shiver. He reaches up and winds his hand into Steve's hair, holding tight. When Steve lines up and pushes inside Mike stares at the ceiling and pants, overcome with how much it is, and how good.

Steve takes it slow, but Mike is still so full. His free hand grasps at the sheets, trying to find somewhere else to hold on. He doesn't actually want to pull Steve's hair out.

"Hey," Steve says, and kisses him on the mouth, a short press. "Okay?"

"Yeah," Mike says. His voice is hoarse but he still manages to tilt his head enough to look at Steve, his flushed cheeks and raised eyebrows. His wide, smiling mouth. "Kiss me."

It comes out sounding a little like a question, like Steve might actually say no, but he doesn't. He bites into Mike's mouth and then licks inside. When he finally starts to thrust, Mike moans, the sound muffled into their kiss.

He isn't going to last long. It's been a weird and emotional day, and on some level he's been waiting for this since he left his parents' house. Someone to make him feel wanted. *Steve* to make him feel wanted. It's weird to want to thank Steve for that, given that Steve's dick is inside him, dragging needy sounds out of him, making him pant and spread his legs and try to get more.

"You know you can stay, right?" Steve says, on a hard thrust, eyes intense. "You know you can just stay."

Mike thought so, but that's different than hearing it. It's different to know and then to feel it. He pulls Steve back down with the hand in his hair, and it's good. It feels right.

There are people who love him.

When he comes, it's a surprise. Neither of them are even touching him, and that doesn't happen often. He squeezes his eyes closed, and Steve slows, rolling his hips instead of pulling out. It's overwhelming how much Mike likes feeling him inside. He kisses Mike's cheek, and his neck. He smooths a hand over Mike's forehead, pushing the hair away, stroking. Mike could cry again, he really could, but instead he digs his heels into the top of Steve's ass, and says, "Go on, keep going."

“You’re okay?” Steve asks, breathless, and if Mike felt capable of opening his eyes he’d roll them at Steve.

“Please,” he says, which seems just as good.

“Okay, okay,” Steve says, mouth tucked against Mike’s ear, pressed so close, the mess of Mike’s come smearing between their bellies. He pulls out almost all the way and then thrusts back in, making Mike feel it. It’s almost too much, but Mike likes that, likes the feeling of being overtaken with it. His fingernails dig into Steve’s back, and Steve doesn’t bother to pull out much at all after that. He just pushes and pushes and pushes, taking.

“God,” Mike says. “You’re - fuck, Steve.”

“What?” Steve says, but he doesn’t sound nearly nonchalant enough to pull it off. Mike manages to open his eyes enough to see Steve’s hair stuck to his forehead with sweat, the red flush over his chest, how hard he’s breathing. How fond he looks, like Mike is something precious.

“I love this,” Mike says, and it might be the closest he’s ever gotten to admitted anything important to Steve.

Steve’s eyes are wide, startled, and maybe he gets it anyway. Mike can tell he’s almost there. His hips stutter and work, losing rhythm.

“I want you to,” Mike says, unable to stop himself, and Steve groans, pressing his face against Mike’s collarbone as he starts to come. It’s not as if they haven’t done this before, but it feels like more, somehow.

Steve collapses onto Mike and lies there, breathing. It should be uncomfortable, but the weight is good, centering, and Mike likes being sticky and sated. When Steve moves to pull out, roll off, Mike wraps both arms around him and keeps him there.

“Not yet,” Mike says, and Steve stills immediately, subsiding.

Steve’s voice is so gentle when he says, “Okay, not yet.”

They fall asleep for a while, and then Steve rouses Mike, tugging him up and into the shower. Mike lets Steve wash his hair, his body, lets Steve press curious fingers inside him and clean him out. It's intimate in a way that would have scared Mike not long ago. He's learning how to live with that.

"I wasn't lying, before," Steve says. He's washing his own hair, Mike leaning back against the tile to watch him. His eyes are closed, which is how Mike knows he's scared to admit it. Mike isn't sure he's ever seen Steve scared before when there wasn't a creature from the Upside Down trying to kill them.

"About what?" Mike asks, though he's pretty sure he knows.

Steve rinses the suds out of his hair before he answers. He sighs, and turns to look at Mike, his mouth twisted up. He looks resigned. He says, "that you could just stay here."

"I have to finish school," Mike says, carefully, keeping his eyes on Steve's face.

Steve actually smiles at that. "I know, I meant - instead of going back to your parents." He shakes his head. "It's stupid, sorry."

"It's not stupid," Mike says, so quickly it's almost an interruption. He swallows, rubbing his fingers into a bruise that Steve left on his hip. Steve's eyes flicker there and then back up. Mike tries to figure out what to say, what he can actually get out. Steve just watches him and waits, even though the water is starting to go tepid. "You're my family," he says, eventually. "You and El. I -"

"Ah," Steve says. The expression on his face is weird - touched and resigned and hurt, and Mike doesn't know why. Steve always has his heart on his sleeve, and he's always waiting for Mike to catch up.

"No, I mean - it's not the same, obviously, you and El. I - did you know, for the longest time, I thought you just wanted me to replace Nance? The next best Wheeler, since you couldn't have her."

"What?" Steve's brows furrow, and he frowns. "That wasn't -"

"I know that now," Mike says, too fast. He is fucking this up. "I

haven't thought that for a long time. I just meant that at first I didn't think this was - anything. I thought -" He shakes his head. "You're important, though. To me. So - if you want me to, I'll stay."

It's terrifying, even saying that much, until Steve's face breaks open. There's wonder on his face, something like joy, maybe. Mike doesn't get that good a look before Steve pushes him back against the wall and kisses him.

"I want you to. Why do you have to make everything so complicated?" Steve asks, and Mike has to laugh.

"Just genetics, I guess."

Mike has to talk to El, fill her in, and he'll have to go to the Byers house and tell - well, Will knows, but he'll have to tell Joyce. He has to pack up the things he needs and bring them to Steve's. It feels too simple. He's not sure he's capable of cutting his parents out of his life entirely - even Nance hasn't managed that - but he doesn't want to be there right now, either. He doesn't want to eat breakfast with them in the dining room and have them not meet his eyes. He doesn't want to listen to them talk around Steve, even if they don't know that it's Steve they're talking around.

"Do you want me to go with you?" Steve asks, later, when they're in bed. Like he doesn't have work tomorrow. Maybe he'd skip, like all the times he cut class to follow Nance around.

"No, it's fine. I'd rather you didn't, actually," Mike says, and turns his head just in time to register the hurt that flashes across Steve's face. He elbows him, not hard enough to hurt, but enough to make him look over. "It's not that, I just - I don't want to hear how they'll talk about you, you know? Some other time."

Ah," Steve says, mouth wry. "Okay."

"Thanks, though," he says. He means it. He's not a very forgiving person, and his parents haven't earned it. He doesn't have to share anything with them that he doesn't want to.

“You’re tough, you know that?” Steve says, so fond that it makes Mike ache.

“I know,” Mike says. “But I’ve got you, too, don’t I? Just in case.”

“You do,” Steve says, and he sounds so certain. Mike can hear the smile in his voice. Right now, that’s all he needs.